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Safety, Health Orientation for Hurricane Responders Distributed by NIH Division

An orientation covering safety awareness for Hurricane Katrina responders has been widely distributed and used by organizations working in the affected area, the presentation's creator told BNA Sept. 13.

The Power Point presentation, "Safety awareness for responders to Hurricane Katrina: protecting yourself while helping others," is being used by the American National Red Cross, the National Response Team, the U.S. Fire Administration, and others, said Bruce Lippy, director of the National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Health Training.

The clearinghouse is funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' Worker Education and Training Program. NIEHS is part of the National Institutes of Health.

The institute, Lippy said, has widely distributed the responder safety orientation throughout the Federal government and to the affected state health departments.

The document is based on recommendations from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Army, Lippy said. It was reviewed for accuracy by NIOSH and OSHA, he added.

The presentation was created Sept. 1, and is now in its ninth edition. WETP wants to keep the orientation as current as possible, and is also working on a companion pocket guide that could be given to response workers afterward, Lippy said.

More Resources Available Online

The orientation is available on the NIEHS Web site along with other resources for response safety.

In a joint effort between WETP and NIEHS's Superfund Basic Research Program, the institute has gathered information to protect workers during cleanup and emergency response, as well as information on environmental health hazards for medical responders, Lippy said.

The NIEHS Web site includes the responder orientation in English and Spanish, additional training resources for Katrina response, an individual team member checklist for OSHA teams going to the Katrina disaster area, and emergency response management information for chemical and biological pollutants.

The site also links to a global information system for assessing environmental hazards caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Institute Working Within Response Plan

The National Response Plan's Worker Safety and Health Support Annex was activated late Sept. 11, and NIEHS provides training assistance to the annex, Lippy said.

The institute would like to see minimum training requirements for cleanup workers in the affected area, Lippy added, as well as hands-on training with respirators.

NIEHS also would like to see training requirements specified in cleanup contracts granted by the government, Lippy said. The institute is currently in discussion with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about this issue.

The institute want to evolve from helping response workers to helping cleanup workers as the needs at the Katrina response site change. "When it gets into cleanup, there will be tens of thousands of workers going into the site," Lippy said.

*The safety orientation for responders is available at
<http://www-apps.niehs.nih.gov/Katrina/wetp/index.cfm>.*

*NIEHS's Hurricane Katrina response information is available at
<http://www-apps.niehs.nih.gov/katrina/>.*